

BY MAJOR STAN ZEZOTARSKI WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM SIKORSKY AIRCRAFT



An Afghan father comforts his wounded son aboard one of the 126th Medical Company's new HH-60L Air Ambulances.

PHOTO BY 126TH MEDICAL COMPANY

The 126th has perhaps deployed to more state and federal emergencies than any other unit in the California Army National Guard.

The 126th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) quickly whisked a soldier, who enemy forces in Afghanistan had shot twice in the hip, from a field crawling with enemy forces to a forward surgical team where the soldier could be treated. The quick response greatly increased the wounded soldier's chances for survival.

The next day, a U.S. infantry unit came under enemy fire at a forward operating base. The 126th dashed to the emergency, moving four injured soldiers from the field to forward surgical help. To provide the best medical care possible, four aircraft were launched to support this mission: two HH-60Ls, one UH-60L and one UH-60A. Two HH-60Ls, now in Afghanistan, are the

latest variant to the line of Blackhawk helicopters designed for medical evacuation.

It was one of 48 medivac missions that the California Army National Guard unit has flown in Afghanistan with the new HH-60L Blackhawk Helicopter. A number of missions also involved Afghan civilians in need of medical help, including children. Sikorsky Aircraft bestowed its first combat rescue awards to crewmen aboard the U.S. Army's new HH-60L medevac helicopter. Sikorsky Winged-S Rescue Awards were given to

The 126th has served in Bosnia and Kosovo, in addition to Afghanistan.

soldiers in the California Army National Guard's 126th Medical Company based at Bagram.

Because of the many paramedic-friendly features the distinguished bubble-windowed helicopter possesses, it was decided Bagram would be its first deployment location. While the previous model of the Blackhawk, the 126th was using, the UH-60L, allowed crewmembers to carry all the needed equipment onboard, the new HH-60L has many features that make it easier for the paramedics. "These are the first two to be deployed," said Sergeant First Class Gary Volkman, acting First Sergeant of a 24-hour standby paramedic team of 20. "They are holding up quite well, and we're getting used to the nice additions. 🐾

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